



October-November 2003

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*Acreage Living is published bimonthly. Please share it with your acreage neighbors. Call your local ISU Extension Office to be placed on the mailing list or contact an ISU Extension staff member listed below to suggest topics for future articles.*

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## **Farm Service Agency offers multiple services to rural Americans**

*By Beth Grabau, Dallas County Farm Service Agency Director*

Do you think the Farm Service Agency (FSA) is just for large farms, farmers, and people in production agriculture? Actually, this United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) agency administers a wide variety of federal farm programs aimed at assisting all rural Americans, regardless of how much land they own.

FSA programs range from traditional agriculture programs for corn and soybean growers to ones that meet the needs of small producers such as programs that relate to wool, lambs, and those that produce mohair or horticulture products. People with truck gardens, apple orchards, hay crops, and more can look to FSA for crop insurance.

FSA offices also can provide cost share to people wanting to establish conservation practices on their land. FSA works closely with the Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) staff to promote and support conservation efforts. In addition, production and beginning farmer loans are available through your local FSA office.

Most FSA offices are located in the county seat and are listed in the phone book under USDA or Farm Service Agency. They often are housed in the same building as the NRCS, Rural Development, and ISU Extension.

If you are an acreage owner interested in starting a small farm produce business, planting an apple orchard, seeding a filter strip along your creek, raising a few sheep, or something else, contact your local FSA office before you start to see how we might help you.

For more information about FSA, go to [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov). Horse owners: check out the "Need Hay? or Have Hay?" link.

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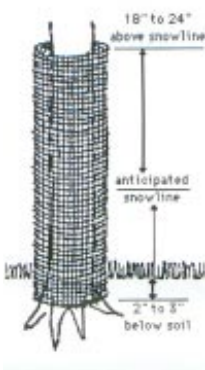
## Control procedures help reduce rabbit damage to landscape plants

By Eldon Everhart, ISU Extension Commercial Horticulture Field Specialist

Rabbits can girdle trunks and branches of fruit trees and landscape plants. Apple, pear, crabapple, and serviceberry plants are frequent targets. Small trees or shrubs with smooth, thin bark are the most vulnerable. Following are some effective control procedures.

### Guards

Use a cylinder of one-quarter mesh hardware cloth (wire mesh) around the base of fruit and ornamental trees and shrubs. Set the guard 1 to 2



inches away from the trunk and 2 to 3 inches in the ground. Extend the wire up at least 18 inches above the ground. In areas where snowdrifts develop, you will need to extend the wire guards up higher. You can protect small shrubs, roses, and raspberries with chicken wire fencing.

### Trapping

Capture rabbits alive in commercial or homemade wire or wood box traps. Peanut butter, oatmeal, or small slices of apples, carrots, cabbage, and other fresh green vegetables make the best bait. Check traps daily to replenish bait or remove the catch. Move traps if they fail to make a catch within a week. Hunting may be another option.

### Repellents

Apply a commercially available repellent. When you apply one in the fall, it may need to be reapplied later in the winter. Thiram is an active ingredient that repels both rabbits and mice. Mix 10 parts water with one part latex paint and spray or brush it on. Commercial repellents that contain Thiram or other active ingredients are available at garden centers and farm supply stores.

### Manipulation of habitat

An often overlooked form of natural control is manipulation of the rabbit's habitat. Remove brush

or stone piles, weed patches, junk, and other debris where rabbits live and hide. Encouraging the rabbit's natural enemies may also help. Hawks, owls, snakes, dogs, and cats can be effective predators on young rabbits.

These safeguards will help reduce rabbit damage. However, when snowdrifts are deep, rabbits can eat the tips of branches and even girdle limbs. It is very important to reduce rabbit populations in early or midwinter. Leaving pruned branches on the ground also reduces damage to living trees because rabbits are more apt to chew the branches and leave the trees alone.

If these methods are ineffective, then commercial rodent baits containing poisoned grain are available. However, baits may be hazardous to humans, pets, and beneficial wildlife. Injury or death may result if other animals eat the bait directly or consume rodents killed by the bait.

## Iowa State University Extension celebrates 100th anniversary

Since 1903, ISU Extension has touched the life of nearly every Iowan in one way or another. What started with a group of Sioux County farmers' interest in taking the land-grant college to the people has resulted today in ISU Extension's presence in every county, helping improve quality of life in Iowa.

In 2002, more than 665,000 people had individual contact with ISU Extension programs. Through workshops, conferences or home study, they learned how to strengthen their families, improve their health, handle finances, help save the environment, become community leaders, and improve their businesses.

Stop by your local ISU Extension office today to learn more about how the organization is using modern communication, technology, and partnerships to help Iowans become their best. Look for local celebrations in your area during the next year and during ISU Extension Week, Nov. 16-22, 2003.

# Prepare for upcoming cold weather by winterizing your home

By Shawn Shouse, ISU Extension Agricultural Engineering Field Specialist



With winter on the way, here are some tips to help you prepare.

## Heating system

First, have a qualified technician check your heating and venting system. Cracked heat exchangers, improper fueling rates, and faulty venting systems can lead to deadly carbon monoxide in your home. Install carbon monoxide detectors to warn you of a problem.

## Water system

If you have a well pit, insulate the lid. Drain water lines in unheated crawl spaces and outbuildings or protect them with heat tape. Water pipes in cabinets against

outside walls may freeze. Place insulation between the pipes and the wall, or leave the cabinet doors open in extreme cold. Remember to disconnect and drain garden hoses.

## Insulation

Roughly 12 inches of attic insulation is recommended. Seal cracks and holes in the walls and foundation with insulation, caulking, or gaskets. Insulating basement walls can lead to big heat savings.

## Windows

Replace missing or loose caulking. Adding layers to the window will hold more heat in the house and will keep the inside window surface warmer and less prone to condensation. Storm windows and plastic film are both effective.

## Snow and Ice

Check your supply of dry sand or ice melt. Place snow fences at least 20 times their height upwind from the driveway or other protected area. Complete snow blower tune-up and maintenance.

## Safety

Have proper winter apparel ready. Review safety rules for family members who may use the snow blower or tractor to move snow. Assemble winter safety kits and put them in your vehicles. Check your smoke detectors. Throw away worn-out extension cords. Every year, hundreds of house fires are caused by overloaded extension cords and temporary heating devices.



# Cougars in Iowa pose little threat to people and animals

By Steve Lekwa, Story County Conservation Director

Some people have feared for their pets, livestock, and even themselves since an adult cougar was hit by a car near Harlan in southwest Iowa. Scattered cougar sightings have continued around the state.

The road-killed cougar was declawed, indicating it was an exotic pet. Iowa Department of Natural Resources biologists find that many reported sightings and plaster track casts often turn out to be those of large dogs.

Recent cougar sightings in west central Iowa appear to be valid, however. Biologists say there may be a few free-ranging cougars living in Iowa. They can't verify whether these animals are escaped pets or are truly wild.

The smaller bobcat has breeding populations in Iowa's major wooded river valleys, particularly in southeast Iowa. Bobcats eat small mammals such as rabbits, while cougars eat prey up to the size of deer. Domestic animals are

seldom taken and human attacks are rare.

Cougars are extremely rare east of the Rocky Mountains, and even bobcats are seldom seen. All American wild cats are nocturnal, and they wander in a wide territory that may cover several counties. They live alone except for mothers and their young. They pose little threat to most Iowa people, pets, or livestock, but owners may wish to keep small animals inside at night if a cougar sighting has been confirmed.

## Iowa law protects bees from harmful pesticides

By Linda Nelson, Dallas County Extension Education Director

Did you know that owners of bees (apiaries) in Iowa are protected by Iowa law? To be protected, the Administrative Code of Iowa, Chapter 25, section 45.31(206), says bee owners must register with the Iowa Department of Land Stewardship (IDALS) by April 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

No more than 30 days after April 1<sup>st</sup>, IDALS reports this information to county Farm Service Agencies (FSA). This information is then available to local pesticide applicators.

What does this mean for honey producers? Prior to applying any pesticide that is toxic to bees, the applicator must check with the FSA office or IDALS to determine the location of hives. If the field or registered

“bee yard” is within a two-mile radius of any registered apiary, the applicator must notify the owner or the owner’s family at least 24 hours and no more than 72 hours prior to application. If the bee keeper and the applicator both agree, the pesticide may be applied earlier than 24 hours or later than 72 hours after notification.

Bees are beneficial insects that help farmers pollinate their crops. Apiarists may keep bees for their honey or to assist in the production of crops such as apples. Whatever the reason, the state of Iowa has recognized that bees are important to agriculture and have made this effort to protect them.

For more information about Iowa agriculture, visit the IDALS Web

site, [www.agriculture.state.ia.us](http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us).

To find your local FSA office, look under United States Government in the white pages of your phone book.



**Protect your bees  
by registering with  
the Iowa Department  
of Land Stewardship  
before April 1st of each  
year. For more  
information, call  
Steve Pederson at  
(515) 281-7657.**



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## Still time for fall lawn care

By Richard Jauron, ISU Extension Horticulture Specialist

Late October and early November are excellent times to fertilize your lawn. Broadleaf herbicides are most effective when applied to weeds. Because the leaves on the weeds have already curled and died, this year herbicides may not be very effective. However, you can apply them on established lawns until early November.

*Q. What can I do if my lawn needs reseeding this fall?*

A. Fall is the best time to renovate and reseed weak or damaged lawns. If you were waiting to reseed your lawn, dry conditions may actually help. The dormant, straw-like grass can easily be power raked or verticut to make a good seed bed. If the ground is too hard for the power rake to nick the soil, water the lawn two days before the verticutting and seeding operation.

Verticut, seed, fertilize, and water before the end of September and you should be able to completely rejuvenate your lawn this fall.

For more information on lawn care, stop by your local ISU Extension office and ask for PM-1057, ***Maintenance Fertilization of Turfgrasses***, or check out the Horticulture and Home Pest Newsletter at [www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/](http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/).

## Quick and cautious stain removal keeps clothing safe and usable

By Joy Rouse, Warren County Extension Education Director

Living on an acreage means you may come in contact with equipment or chemicals that could stain your clothes. Here are a few common problems you might experience.

### Gasoline, diesel fuel, and motor oil

*Safety Note: Clothing is flammable, but when soaked with fuel it is even more dangerous if exposed to a flame or ignition source.*

Pretreatment is important. Use detergent-based stain removers, not solvent-based ones. If pretreatment products are not available, apply a heavy-duty detergent or powdered detergent mixed with water. Make a paste and work it into the stain.

After pretreatment, wash the garment in the hottest water that is safe for the fabric with the recommended amount of detergent for a regular load of laundry. Rinse and inspect before drying. Do not place garment in the dryer if you still smell fuel. Air clothing outdoors until fuel smell is gone and/or repeat the pretreatment steps.

### Pesticides

If full-strength liquid concentrate spills on clothes, handle them with rubber gloves and discard the clothing immediately. Always wash pesticide-stained clothing separately. Follow these steps when laundering the clothing.

- Wash pesticide-soiled clothing as soon as possible after wearing to achieve maximum removal of pesticide residue.
- Prerinse or presoak the pesticide-soiled clothes before washing and do not reuse the water. If your washing machine has a prerinse cycle, use it.
- Use hot water to wash. To save energy, use cold water to rinse.
- Use either a heavy-duty liquid detergent or the amount of powdered detergent that is recommended by the manufacturer for heavily soiled loads.
- Wash only a few items at one time, use the highest water setting, and do not over crowd the washer.
- Set the washer at the recommended setting for heavily soiled clothes, usually 10-12 minute wash with rinse cycles following. Never use the short cycles recommended for knits or delicate fabrics.
- After washing pesticide-soiled clothes, hang them outdoors on a line in the sun to dry because sunlight can degrade some pesticides or use the high heat setting on your dryer. Pesticides tend to be volatile so hot air helps reduce contamination.
- After washing a load of pesticide-soiled clothes and

before using your washing machine for other family laundry, run the machine through a complete cycle full of water and detergent without any clothes to help remove trace amounts of pesticide that may be in your washer.

For more information on stain removal, visit the ISU Extension Answerline Web site at [www.extension.iastate.edu/answerline/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/answerline/). Two Extension publications that detail stain removal also are available: *Quick 'n Easy Stain Removal* (PM 858), [www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM858.pdf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM858.pdf), and *What to do when clothes are soiled with pesticide* (PM 1663B), [www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1663B.pdf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1663B.pdf).

### ISU Extension AnswerLine

Information and resources for consumers with home and family questions about child development, cleaning, consumer management, food preparation and preservation, home environment, household equipment, nutrition, and textiles and laundry

**(800) 262-3804**

Monday through Friday,  
9 a.m. until noon and  
1-4 p.m.